

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS



“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” {Galatians 5:22-23}

It's the most wonderful time of the year! I love Christmas. I love all the things associated like twinkly little Christmas lights, candles burning, goodies baking, and cards in my mailbox from friends I haven't really been in contact with for the past year. I love pulling the carefully wrapped ornaments from the boxes and remembering where we got them or who gave them to use. There are ornaments on our tree, carefully made by little hands in our churches through the years that now represent homes with children of their own. It is always a joy to remember each one.

We have several traditions in our home that center around Christmas. One of those was begun in just the last few years. We have a set of a dozen mitten ornaments. They came in a deal Tami got at a yard sale where the owners had decided to move from a country Christmas motif to something more modern. We decided that first year to put a prayer request in each one before we hung them on the tree. Then each night when we would read our Advent devotion we would pull down one of the mittens and pray for the need inside of it. After Christmas, we carefully tuck the mittens back in the box and although we pray for the needs throughout the year, the papers remain to be opened the following Christmas. Opening those mittens each year always brings a special kind of joy. As we pull out those names, those needs that were heavy on our heart the year before we find that many of those prayers have been answered and we are able to begin our season with a special reminder of how very much God loves us and listens to our prayers.

Each year as I begin to think about the Christmas/Advent book, I think and pray about how God may want to work in the lives of our people during the Christmas season. This year, throughout the whole year, my

mind has been on serving and how we can serve each other and our community at large. I began to think about the spirit of Christmas and how that relates to the fruits of the Spirit that should be manifested in our lives throughout the whole year. This time of year is filled with opportunities to present to others the Reason we have to celebrate. It is my hope that some of the ideas within this book can cause your Christmas to become more meaningful and give you opportunities to serve others around you. It is a challenge when the media is filling us up with things to want for Christmas, to take this time to be a bit more giving, a bit more caring, and bring a bit more peace. I hope this book can be a tool to help you do just that and have more opportunities to shine as a light in the world.

I want to thank everyone who had a part in creating, proofing, coping, binding, and putting up with me during this process. I want to especially thank Sandra Conner for writing the devotions this year. I also want to thank Dan & Kate Conner, Tami, and Vickie Bayne, for their contributions. And lastly, thank you Mrs. Debbie (my admin assistant) for surpassing "going way and beyond the call of duty." With out her efforts, the book would not have come together and I would be having one of my spells.

I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas and I hope this new year will be the most rewarding year you have had to date. "Serve the Lord with Gladness!!"

Love,

Mr. Tim

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